



DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

ASSISTANCE PAYMENTS

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Dear food stamps recipient,

Starting January 1, 2006, Medicare will now provide prescription drug coverage. All Medicare beneficiaries will have the opportunity to enroll in a prescription drug plan. If you do not enroll in a Medicare drug plan by May 15, 2006, you may have to pay a penalty if you decide to enroll later. So, it is important not to delay if you will need Medicare coverage to help you with your prescription drugs.

There are several Medicare drug plans to choose from. The plans may be different in terms of cost and whether they pay for the drugs you need. You will want to select a drug plan that covers the prescription drugs you need, will let you use a pharmacy near you and is affordable. For help to choose a drug plan,

- ✓ Call Senior Health Information and Insurance education (SHIINE) 1-800-536-8197 or
- ✓ Read about drug plan choices and benefit information in your 2006 *Medicare and You* handbook or
- ✓ Call 1-800-Medicare (1-800-633-4227) or use the Medicare Prescription Drug Plan Finder at www.Medicare.gov

Like any health insurance, there will be a monthly premium and other cost share for the new Medicare prescription drug coverage. The Medicare program will provide a subsidy or "extra help" for people with limited income and assets to make the coverage more affordable. Depending on your income and assets this extra help can greatly reduce your drug plan costs. To apply for extra help to pay for your Medicare prescription drug costs,

- ✓ Call your Department of Social Services Food Stamps program Benefits Specialist or
- ✓ Call the Social Security Administration at 1-800-772-1213 or go to www.socialsecurity.gov

If you qualify for extra help paying for your Medicare prescription drug coverage costs, you may see your food stamp benefits go down as you spend less on drugs. Using the extra help means you will have more cash to spend on food and other things that you used to spend on prescription drugs. If you have questions about your food stamp benefits, please call your Department of Social Services Benefit Specialist.

If you are a Medicare beneficiary and need coverage for prescription drugs, please apply for extra help and enroll in a Medicare prescription drug plan right away so that you take advantage of the new Medicare program when it begins on January 1, 2006.

Sincerely,
Kristin Townsend, Medical Eligibility Program Specialist